

chairman of the Budget Committee, used to point out, every time in recent history that we have had a balanced budget, we balanced it with revenues and spending around 20 percent of gross domestic product. Our revenues are now at about 16 percent of gross domestic product. If we balanced our budget at that level, at 16 percent of gross domestic product, it would be the lowest level of Federal spending since 1951, when half of the Federal budget still went to the Department of Defense and half of American seniors still lived in poverty.

They say the Republican Party wants to go backward, but do they really want to go back to that? That would change our country dramatically and for the worse at a time when, even with Federal student aid, the cost of college remains unaffordable for too many aspiring students, when our energy and technology infrastructure is lagging and our transportation infrastructure is crumbling, and when our international competitors are making greater investments in 21st century innovation than we are.

Saving money by reforming how we deliver health care is not just possible, it is happening around us. A 2008 report from the Dartmouth Atlas Project held up some promising examples, predicting that, using the Mayo Clinic as a benchmark, the Nation could reduce health care spending by as much as 30 percent for acute and chronic illnesses. A benchmark based on Senator HATCH's home State company, Intermountain Healthcare, predicts a reduction of more than 40 percent.

So let's get to work, together in a bipartisan fashion, to give American families the health care system they deserve.

Instead of waste and inefficiency, poor outcomes and missed opportunities, let's have a health care system that is the envy of the world, not an outlier on high costs and low results.

This approach has a triple benefit: It protects seniors and families who rely on Medicare and Medicaid. It improves patient outcomes and makes our experience of the health care system better in terms of results, and it dials back health care spending and helps protect us from that exploding cost.

The alternative, slashing benefits, does nothing to curb the underlying cost problem, and it certainly doesn't improve care. It only does one thing, harms seniors and degrades the programs they count on.

During a 2011 Senate HELP Committee hearing that I chaired, Greg Poulsen of Utah's Intermountain Healthcare said:

Intermountain and other organizations have shown that improving quality is compatible with lowering costs and, indeed, high-quality care is generally less expensive than substandard care.

Let this be our guiding principle as we work together to ease the burden of excessive health costs on both the Fed-

eral balance sheet and on our fellow Americans' pocketbooks.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business be extended until 6:30, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO JAIME HERNANDEZ

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise to honor a man of great distinction and valor: Maj. Jaime I. Hernandez of the United States Air Force. It is my great honor to acknowledge this American hero on the cusp of his promotion to Lieutenant Colonel.

Jaime is a loving son and a man of perseverance. A loyal Nevadan and American, he hails from Las Vegas. Upon graduating from Bonanza High School in 1994, Jaime entered the Air Force Academy, where he began his noble service to our Nation.

Major Hernandez's promotion to Lieutenant Colonel marks another chapter in his inspiring story. Major Hernandez has risen through the ranks during his time with the Air Force—a testament to his steadfast dedication, unyielding courage, and impressive tactical skill. His career is a decorated one. Major Hernandez has served six combat deployments in support of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, logging more than 2900 hours in flight, 1300 of which were in combat. His work as Chief of Weapons and Tactics for the 37th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron led to hundreds of successful missions. He has proven himself time and again through his B-1 aircraft expertise.

During one of his six overseas deployments, Major Hernandez earned an Air Medal with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters. While on a mission to safeguard a lost team of Marines in eastern Afghanistan, Jaime and his crew were fired on by a team of insurgents on the ground. In an act of bravery and skill, Jaime and his aerial crew drew fire from the insurgents while the lost Marine ground team could recover and maneuver around the insurgent squad.

Major Hernandez has demonstrated repeatedly his exceptional skill and courage. He has flown across the desert skies of both Iraq and Afghanistan, to provide support for operations there. Over the course of his career, he has served as a squadron Electronic Warfare Officer, Flight Commander, Instructor and Evaluator Weapon Systems Officer, Wing Weapons Officer, and Instructor at the USAF Weapons School.

Major Hernandez is currently the Deputy Division Chief at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, and is responsible for policies and procedures relating to the Combat Air Forces Information Oper-

ations. Among other achievements, he graduated in the top third of his class from Squadron Officer's School and received an Outstanding Flying Award from the U.S. Air Force Weapons School.

I laud Maj. Jaime I. Hernandez's dedication to the United States Air Force and country. His father Phillip Hernandez and their family are happy to celebrate Major Hernandez's upcoming promotion on February 1, 2013, to Lieutenant Colonel.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT MITCHELL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a dear friend of mine and a distinguished citizen of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Mr. Robert Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell—better known across Kentucky's Fifth Congressional District as Bob—recently received the William Hacker, M.D. 2013 Leader of the Year Award from Kentucky's Leadership Tri-County. This organization, which represents Laurel, Knox, and Whitley counties, recognized Bob for his decades of service to the Bluegrass State.

From 1986 until his retirement last year, Bob served as Congressman HAL ROGERS's district administrator for the Fifth District. In that job, he was HAL's eyes and ears throughout southern and eastern Kentucky. He oversaw three field offices, provided constituent services, and was HAL's liaison to State and local government. It is thanks to him that many people in Kentucky now enjoy the benefits of a multitude of infrastructure, economic development, and tourism projects.

Bob has also served as HAL's top political adviser and campaign manager, and was his field representative from 1981 to 1986. He has served on the executive committee of the Republican Party of Kentucky, been a delegate to Republican National Conventions, and was twice elected magistrate in Knox County.

Bob's father, the late Murrell Mitchell, also served as a magistrate of Knox County and was a member of the Knox County School Board. It was he who inspired Bob to seek fulfillment in public service. A graduate of Lynn Camp High School in Corbin, KY, Bob first served his country in the uniform of the U.S. Army. He was in the Army's military police and served in Vietnam.

Bob has been employed in the private sector, too: He has worked for L&N Railroad, United Parcel Service, and as the owner and operator of a grocery store. He has been a member of the Corbin Rotary Club and the Lynn Camp Optimist Club. And the Mountain Laurel Boy Scouts of America District honored him with its first-ever Daniel Boone Visionary Award.

Bob enjoys politics, obviously, as well as fishing and following college sports. He is an avid fan of Keeneland Race Course and has owned racehorses. But I believe what he is most looking forward to is spending more time with